



Nation

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The Cooper Clan Portrait of a Hockey Family

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**Wishing you
all Happy Holidays
and a wonderful
New Year**



Coals in Xmas stockings

By Will Nicholls

The holiday season is upon us and for some the Christmas cheer isn't so loud. While Indian Affairs Minister John Duncan is quietly glad Parliament is finished until January, the community of Attawapiskat will still be looking at a chilly and sparse Christmas.

The 22 houses (originally 15) won't arrive until then and while Duncan said Ottawa will pay for them up front, his handler then added the imposed \$1300-a-day third-party manager will look for excess money from the community to pay for them.

Aboriginal women across Canada are looking at renewed hope as the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women handed them an unexpected gift. They have decided to conduct an inquiry into the murders and disappearances of Aboriginal women and girls across Canada.

The Committee only holds inquiries when they feel there could be serious violations of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Jeannette Corbiere Lavell, President of the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC), and Sharon McIvor of the Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action (FAFIA) asked the Committee to hold this inquiry. And, yes, Canada signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention, which authorizes the Committee to investigate allegations of "grave or systematic" violations of the Convention by means of an inquiry. In that light their response should be interesting and enlightening in many ways.

"Aboriginal women in Canada experience rates of violence 3.5 times higher than non-Aboriginal women, and young Aboriginal women are five times more

likely to die of violence. NWAC has documented the disappearances and murders of over 600 Aboriginal women and girls in Canada over about 20 years, and we believe that there may be many more. The response of law enforcement and other government officials has been slow, often dismissive of reports made by family members of missing women, uncoordinated and generally inadequate," said Corbiere Lavell. "Canada has not lived up to its obligations under international human rights law to prevent, investigate and remedy violence against Aboriginal women and girls."

Five years ago, the Committee did an inquiry into similar violations in Mexico. Women's groups from there said the Committee's action created an environment where the Mexican government responded quickly to address the situation. We can all hope the Harper administration acts in the same manner.

It is embarrassing enough for Canada to have the Red Cross give direct assistance to the beleaguered community of Attawapiskat. Now Canada's reputation will be even more tarnished by this latest and needed move requested by both Aboriginal and non-Native women of Canada to the United Nations.

All I can say is Santa Claus knows who has been naughty and who's been nice. I think a certain Minister of Indian... oops... Aboriginal Affairs might find some coal in his stocking on Christmas morning.

Even so I wish him and indeed all of you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Every year is full of promise and potential and it is up to us to make the most of it. Take care of each other and the best of wishes from all of us here at *the Nation*.

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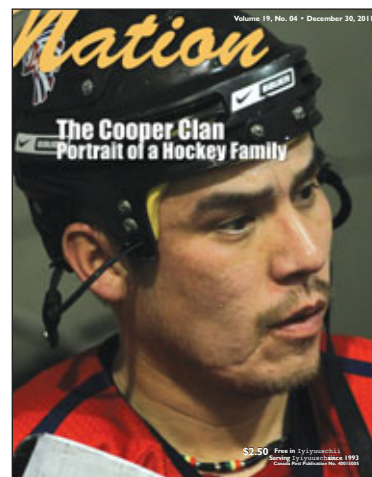


photo by:
Daniel Coyle

Is that you Santa?

By Sonny Orr



I recently listened to a good old country Christmas song, "Santa looked a lot like daddy, or daddy looked a lot like him...", and it made me smile. Sometimes, songs just make up the truth as it is, and within that little ditty of a tune, it managed to expose Santa for who he truly is – you and me at some point in our lives. Sometimes, Scrooge surfaces at the wrong time during shopping rushes in long line-ups and miles and miles of mega malls. But in reality, Santa does look a lot like daddy / mommy.

Sometimes, maintaining a constant aura of mystery and suspense, when opening a door to a closet full of wrapped-up gifts, presents itself as a difficult time to explain to little ones that you are really a secret operative working for Santa, because his factory hasn't been able to keep up with the entire world's demands for the latest toys and goodies, and you have to keep his hidden stash safe until he shows up to pick them up and then... climb down the chimney.

It's like outsourcing to India to save costs for telemarketers and big-name companies like Google. That's how big Santa's business is, I explain. That explanation seemed to do the trick for a persistent two-year-old determined to unwrap those hidden treasures found in the closet.

What about the milk and cookies left for Santa that mysteriously disappear? How come there's no tracks of reindeer on the rooftop, asked one smart-aleck kid. I come up with the fact that hover technology has been around for years and it's easier for Santa just to hover around from rooftop to rooftop instead of coming to a complete halt on every roof.

Mr Claus also has introduced the use of Mini-Santas to climb down chimneys for him, so he can multi-task and deliver to entire neighbourhoods in under 30 seconds. He recently cloned himself so he

could cover everyone in under three hours, just after midnight and before dawn.

I hear his sled is even equipped with a Tassimo espresso-maker to make sure he doesn't get too sleepy and forget someone. Of course, his sled is made out of light carbon material and his reindeer are fed nothing but the best organic grains and carrots. On that special Christmas Eve night, they get an extra dose of candy-cane-flavoured carrots and apples, just to give them a sugar rush that's needed at halftime.

Even Mrs Claus has taken on the role of keeping track of her hubbie via satellite GPS and forwards any last-minute requests from kids around the globe. Once every 10 seconds, the Naughty list is revised and updates Santa, just in case someone has a change of heart and makes it to the Nice list.

Of course, all this is done at practically the speed of light. So kids, that little waft of air you feel might be Santa (or one of his souped-up clones or drones) zipping up and down the chimney. And for those who have electrical heating, Santa has figured out a way to pop out of an electrical outlet and still get the job done in time.

Nowadays, Christmas takes up a lot of energy but is still the fastest way to get something underneath the tree. Thanks to the new Santa website where you can still qualify right up until midnight Christmas Eve to make your Christmas Wish List, the holidays seem to have more time for enjoyment and family get-togethers. Thanks to Santa (who looks a lot like daddy) and the miracle of online shopping wish lists and energy-saving electric lights, the season looks good for Santa.

Merry Christmas everyone, and don't forget, Santa will get an update for 2012.

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Taykwa Tagamou Nation's first Aboriginal hockey tourney scores big

By Daniel Coyle

The CREE Senior Hockey Tournament was not the only tournament held over the weekend of December 8-11. Taykwa Tagamou Nation Recreation also presented its first Annual Aboriginal Hockey Tournament that weekend at the Tim Horton Events Centre in Cochrane, Ontario.

The inaugural edition of the tournament saw 12 teams vying for a top prize of \$18,000. All proceeds from the tournament will go to fund programs run by the Taykwa Tagamou Nation Recreation department.

"The tournament is a high-calibre hockey tournament, with most players having played in the OHL, university varsity hockey, and NHL farm teams," said Christopher Hunter, Taykwa Tagamou Nation's Recreation Director, who has worked for five years to bring this event to life.

The Sudbury Coppercliff Hawks won the tournament in a thrilling double overtime victory over the Moose Factory Scrappers and took home \$18,000 in prize money. While the Scrappers, who were Class A champs at

the 2010 CREE Senior Hockey Tournament, took home \$8000 in prize money as tournament finalists.

The consolation match saw Mistissini take home a cash prize of \$6000 by defeating the Moosonee Cree Aski by a score of 3-0 in an exciting "winner take all" game.

Not unlike the CREE Senior Hockey tourney, the objective of the tournament is to raise funds for Taykwa Tagamou Nation Recreation programs and to sponsor exceptional athletes and students who wish to pursue athletics and academics outside their communities.

To strengthen the fundraising effort, tournament attendees also enjoyed a Monster Bingo and concert, which took place at the Tim Horton Events Centre during the tourney. Although a final figure of how much money was raised was not available at press time, the tournament was successful enough for planning to begin to bring it back in 2012.

Concerns have been expressed by both organizers and hockey players about the Taykwa Tagamou Nation and CREE Senior tournaments taking place on the same weekend. However, such a conflict is unlikely to occur in future.

"Our committee has decided to run this tournament again, but it will be one week earlier than Val-d'Or's annual tournament," said Hunter in reference to the



Sudbury Coppercliff Hawks, Tournament Champions, they won \$18,000.00



Mistissini wins Consolation championship, they won in a winner take all game against Moosonee Cree Aski, final score 3 - 0, total cash prize of \$6000.00



TTN Recreation Director, Christopher Hunter posing with the Championship banner before the finals

CREE Senior Hockey tournament, which takes place in Val-d'Or and Senneterre, Quebec.

"As a matter of fact, I challenge more Quebec teams to enter the Taykwa Tagamou Nation Aboriginal Hockey Tournament next year if they so choose. But I forewarn them that they will need to stack their team correctly if they wish to win the \$20,000 cash prize."

So the gauntlet has been laid down and the challenge made. And that is good news for Native hockey players and fans in both Ontario and Quebec who look forward to these tournaments as the first real signs of winter and the approaching holiday season.

TAKING A NEW TURN IN 2012?

We hope that the New Year will lead you towards new horizons. Some of you will continue along a trail filled with exciting family initiatives, others will travel a road of educational perseverance.

Whether you pursue your educational project in your home community or at the **First Peoples Pavilion, UQAT Val-d'Or Campus**, rest assured that you can always count on our team to support you throughout your university career.

Happy New Year!

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YOU AND YOURS A WONDERFUL NEW YEAR
FILLED WITH HEALTH, JOY AND PEACE.**

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Changing attitudes

Aboriginal AIDS Awareness Week helps break down stereotypes

By Irkar Beljaars

news

The Native Women's Shelter of Montreal (NWSM), in partnership with the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network, presented their Aboriginal AIDS Awareness Week (AAAW) event in Montreal on December 2.

Hosted by Harvey Michel, the event brought First Nations together to help support change in Aboriginal communities in regards to AIDS. Unfortunately, AIDS is still a four-letter word in most First Nations communities. Nakuset, the NWSM executive director, spoke about how little is being done for Aboriginal women in regards to AIDS in Montreal, and how important it was to have this particular event to draw attention to the lack of services Native women receive in this city.

Naturally, change starts with attitude towards a disease that is on the rise in First Nations communities. Aboriginal people in Canada continue to be over-represented in HIV/AIDS epidemics. The 2010 Epi Update from the Public Health Agency of Canada reports that 4,000 to 6,100 First Nations, Inuit and Métis are living with HIV, including AIDS.

The theme for AAWW this year was a focus on community. National Chief Shawn A-in-chut Atleo commented on the role we all have to play in responding to HIV/AIDS. "Everyone has a part in creating change. The fact that you are gathered here today demonstrates your commitment to addressing how HIV and AIDS are unfolding in First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities. You are leaders in your own right."

Many of the speakers at the event shared a common message: the situation is getting very serious, especially for Aboriginal women. Part of the message was defeating the myth of AIDS as just a gay disease. A big issue in the spread of AIDS is drugs, and how rampant drug use has become in our communities.

Also part of the message was the need to get beyond condoms and work on self-healing. The rise in AIDS can be linked back to residential schools, due to

the lack of sexual education and the fracturing of the family structures that happened on many First Nations reserves. There are also links to Native youth depression and self-esteem, which have been factors in the increase of AIDS.

Fiona Cook of the Native Women's Association of Canada stated, "People are scared in the communities.... There was better work 25 years ago than there is today, which increases the importance of friendship centres. Old myths die hard!"

Cook went on to discuss the need for resources and proper investment in First Nations communities. "We cannot combat AIDS if we don't have the resources."

One of the most powerful presentations at the event was from Visioning Health: Arts and Positive Aboriginal Women (PAW). Doris Peltier talked about her battle with sexual assault and how she became an activist. "The essence of who we are is beautiful."

Peltier went on to speak about the display of PAW's artwork from all across Canada, proving that being HIV-positive isn't a death sentence. There is life after becoming positive.

Former Liberal MP Marlene Jennings spoke about the importance and much-needed work in both Native and non-Native communities to combat AIDS, and like Chief Atleo, Minister of Health Leona Aglukkaq sent a message talking about how pleased she was to mark the 23rd World AIDS Day and the start of AAWW in Canada.

"The Government of Canada recognizes that Aboriginal people are over-represented in the HIV/AIDS epidemic. We are committed to keep working with Aboriginal communities to reduce the spread of HIV while providing care and support for those living with and affected by HIV and AIDS."

The Canadian government this year alone has invested more than \$72 million in programs, research, surveillance and a greater awareness under the federal initiative to address HIV/AIDS in Canada. But

when it comes down to it, it's all about attitude – attitude towards people with HIV/AIDS and the fear that people still have of those living with these diseases.

Recently, CNN featured a story about a non-Native teenager being denied admission to a prep school




Doris Peltier

because of his HIV status. The school's position seemed to be the old 1980s point-of-view about the disease. One of the fears the prep school mentioned was the fear that this child would become sexually active, which was the basis for their denial of an honour student who just wanted to go to a good school.

Now, the fact that a non-Native prep school for well-to-do families can still use archaic stereotypes to deny an honour student the right to a good education goes to show that the fear of HIV/AIDS crosses class lines and culture lines – whether it's a community in Canada or one in the American Midwest. These stereotypes are what AAWW is trying to eliminate.

In the end, we should be embracing people with HIV/AIDS and not discriminate against them, and hopefully initiatives like AAWW will help to do that.

You can listen to Irkar Beljaars on Native Solidarity News every Tuesday at 6pm on CKUT (90.3 FM) and @Mohawk_Voice (Twitter).



*Wishing you all a
Joyous Holiday Season
and a New Year filled
with Peace and
Happiness.*



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your dog.**



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Season



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With this in mind, Goldcorp - Project Eleonore wants to say thank you to all employees, contractors, partners and the entire population.

May this holiday season bring you joy and happiness to you and your loved ones

Attawapiskat's he said, she said

While approximately 90 families remain homeless in Attawapiskat amidst the community's hot button housing crisis, Chief Theresa Spence and Aboriginal Affairs Minister John Duncan are still locking horns over Ottawa's proposed third-party management of the community.

At the beginning of December the Conservative government decided to put Attawapiskat under third-party management at the tune of \$1,300 a day at the community's expense to examine the Band Council's spending leading up to this most recent housing crisis. Spence, however, refused to cooperate with the appointed third-party manager who has since left the community at Spence's request.

Since that time Spence and Duncan have met to discuss the crisis and the government has agreed to provide 22 modular homes for Attawapiskat residents as soon as the ice roads open in January or February.

At the same time, Duncan told CTV's Question Period on Sunday, December 11, that Spence had indeed agreed to third-party management while the chief contends that the minister is in fact lying.

Spence later told CTV: "He's a liar, because I didn't say I agreed. Third party is not the answer here. We declared an emergency crisis, not a crisis on finances."

The two parties have since agreed to meet again on December 16 to work on an agreement.

UN inquiry for murdered & missing Aboriginal women

The Native Women's Association of Canada and the Feminist Alliance for International Action jointly announced that United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has decided to conduct an inquiry into Canada's lack of action into the cases of over 580 murdered and missing women.

The announcement comes after both groups appealed to the Committee in January and September of this year. This inquiry procedure is used to investigate what the Committee believes to be serious violations of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

The UN committee, composed of 23 independent experts from around the world, is the organization's main authority on women's human rights.

While this statement was made on December 13, one day later the Minister for the Status of Women, Rona Ambrose, made an announcement denying that an actual inquiry had begun. She stated that she had only received a letter from the UN requesting that meetings take place this coming February.

Ambrose went on to say that she is looking into this issue and will respond to the letter.

Goeland project moving along

It looks like mining companies have finally learned that the only way they can set up shop in Eeyou Istchee is by making cooperative agreements that work with the communities to provide better prosperity and environmental sustainability. The Cree Nation of Waswanipi signed a Pre-Development Agreement (PDA) with Canada Rare Earths to develop the Goeland rare earth mine.

This follows the agreement signed on October 20, between the First Nation of Waswanipi and the Grand Council of the Crees with Geomega Resources Inc. regarding the Montviel project.

This PDA will ensure that there will be jobs and business opportunities for the Crees starting from the pre-development phase all the way to the eventual production. In return for signing the agreement, the Cree will be part of the development of the mine making sure it works with the needs of the community as well as the environment.

Waswanipi will also be receiving funds every year for the duration of the agreement as a part of the mining company's commitment to the community.

Comic strip courtesy of Tundra Comics: www.tundracomics.com





A winter gathering

Cree Nation takes over Val-d'Or for its annual hockey tournament

Story and photos by Daniel Coyle

The 31st edition of the CREE Senior Hockey & Broomball Tournament took place in Val-d'Or and Senneterre December 8-11. And as usual, the attendance of an estimated 3000+ people from Cree communities across northern Quebec and Ontario transformed Val-d'Or into the Cree Nation capital – at least for a weekend.

This year's tourney saw participation by 44 men's and women's hockey teams and 21 women's broomball teams, playing a grand total of 142 games over four days.

Founded in 1980, the CREE Senior Hockey Tournament was initially designed as a fundraising event for a hockey team organized by the Grand Council of the Crees called the CRA Drummers.

"They invited teams from the Cree communities and the Algonquin nations and put a tourney together," explained Charles J. Hester, a tournament organizer and Recreation Director in Waskaganish. "It has grown every year since then. There was eight teams in that first year, and this year we have 65 teams."

One aspect of the tournament that helps make it the biggest First Nations tournament in Quebec and one of the largest, if not the largest, in Canada is the prize money. This year, over \$75,000 in prize money was paid to winning teams. However, the objective of the tournament is to raise funds to be used for programs in Cree communities.

"IT'S THE BIGGEST GATHERING OF THE CREE NATION, THERE ARE OTHER GATHERINGS. THERE ARE CONFERENCES AND THE ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY. BUT THOSE OTHER EVENTS ARE ATTENDED BY SELECT PEOPLE. HERE, ANYONE CAN COME, PUT TOGETHER A TEAM... IT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO THE CREE COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE."

"In previous years, the tournament has raised anywhere from \$25,000 to \$40,000, even \$50,000 – from the gate, sponsors and other fundraising inside the building, like raffle tickets," said Hester.

"All the proceeds go to the Cree Nation Bears midget AA hockey program, or bantam CC program. It also

goes to summer hockey programs. And we do sponsor kids that are gifted so that they can pursue school or sports outside the community. The money raised in the tourney goes back to the kids."

The tournament has evolved since its early days in the 1980s, becoming better organized, more family-oriented and

providing more serious and entertaining competition.

"Most of the people who were here in the 1980s realize it is a different event now," Hester explained. "Back then, there was a bar here (in the arena) and they served beer. It wasn't a good scene. Sometimes there was more action in the

stands then on the ice. I remember coming to play here when I was 15 and having to walk through puddles of beer to get to the ice.

"But then the decision was made to close the bar and it is much better now. The players are much more serious, and more competitive. There are players who play recreational hockey. But don't misunderstand, it is very serious hockey. People like to win and it is a better show than it was back then."

One of the biggest changes to the tournament has been the recent inclusion of non-Native teams, including the two Class A teams from Val-d'Or and Amos that met in this year's final.

"It has been a positive thing," said Hester of the participation of non-Native teams over the last few years. "The teams in Val-d'Or and Amos are very strong, and I don't know how (Cree) people will feel about their participation. But as far as hockey is concerned, when we invited the (non-Native) teams, they bring up the level of the hockey that is played."

The participation of non-Native teams may be a subject of debate among tournament participants and organizers after this year's Class A hockey final saw two non-Native teams face-off in an entertaining matchup eventually won by Amos. However, one Cree spectator was overheard describing the Class A final between Val-d'Or and Amos "like



watching Belarus and Ukraine in the Olympic gold medal game". Not surprisingly, the crowd was sparse for the Class A final, which is the main event of the tournament and typically heavily attended.

CREE Hockey – A Meeting Place

While the prize money and competition are major incentives for teams to participate, the tournament has gained importance in the Cree Nation for more than just the hockey; it has become an event where people from Cree communities across the north gather together, overcoming the great distances that exist between some communities.

"It's the biggest gathering of the Cree Nation," said Hester. "There are other gatherings. There are conferences and the Annual General Assembly. But those other events are attended by select peo-

ple. Here, anyone can come, put together a team. People can come and get together with their friends and their family; people from the south and from other nations. It is very important to the Cree community as a whole."

The tournament has also provided attendees with the opportunity to meet new people. Indeed, many married couples are eager to talk about how they met, and how their romance blossomed on a cold Val-d'Or weekend, at one of CREE Senior Hockey Tournaments over the years. Although it is not documented, some people believe that the tournament contributes to a higher than usual birthrate in the month of August each year, nine months after the tournament.

"Last year, at the 30th annual tourney, we were having fun sitting with the other recreation directors and I asked them, 'Do you know anyone who met their wife or husband here at the tourney?' and everybody raised their hand," recalled Hester with a smile.

"It is the time that the Cree get together and people meet each other and then long-term relationships get started. Many of the people you meet here who are husband and wife, chances are they met here at the event."

For many people, the old saying "hockey is life, the rest is just details" are just words on a t-shirt. But for the Cree who attend this annual tournament, no truer words could be spoken.





Lac Simon Beavers salute the Mistissini Chummies on their victory.



Battling for ice supremacy

The 31st Annual CREE Senior Hockey & Broomball Championship Roundup

Story and photos by Daniel Coyle

For the first time in the 31-year history of the CREE Senior Hockey and Broomball Tournament, two non-Native teams faced off in the tournament's Class A hockey final. After posting identical records of 3-0 with 13 goals for and 3 goals against, Team Val-d'Or and Bar Chez Frid of Amos each won close games against the Wemindji Wolves and Waswanipi Chiefs respectively, to earn a berth in the final.

After opening the scoring and tallying the winning goal, Gabriel Côté won MVP honours leading Bar Chez Frid to their first Class A championship, as they dumped their Route 117 rivals by a score of 3-1.

In addition to a Class A championship, Bar Chez Frid dominated the individual awards as Raphael Woodbury picked up Best Forward and Top Scorer honours, and Adam Morneau was selected as the Class A's Top Goalie. The Class A Best Defence award went to Joel Frechette of Team Val-d'Or.

"It's a very big tournament and we really enjoyed our time here," said Pierre-Charles Crépéault, captain of Bar Chez Frid and a tutor at Polyvalente de la Forêt, where he provides academic guidance to students playing for the Amos Forestiers, including young Cree players past and present like Alexander

Hester, his brother Brett, Silas Neeposh and Deverick Ottereyes.

"It is our third time here and it's very good hockey and a lot of fun. It's great to have non-Native teams in this tournament because it brings our communities together with the Cree people," continued Crépéault, who hopes the tournament will one day take place in his hometown of Amos.

While the Class A hockey division is considered the highlight of the tournament, it was Women's Hockey and Broomball that produced the most exciting finishes this year.

Women's Hockey saw Team Pikogan meet the Mistissini Mustangs in an exciting final. Each team exchanged goals, entering the third period tied 2-2. Team Pikogan briefly took the lead in the third on a goal by Alex-Sandra Baril, but the Mustangs responded with a goal by Courtney Neeposh with just over two minutes remaining. It appeared that the ladies would settle the final in overtime when Wabaguin Longchap took a pass from Helen Gunner and scored the winning goal with less than seven seconds remaining in the game.

Longchap, who has also represented Eastern Door & the North at the National Aboriginal Hockey



Amy Diamond in action



Amy Diamond accepts Best Goalie Award

Championship, took home both MVP and Top Scorer awards for the tournament.

Neeposh, who also scored two goals in the final, was honoured as Best Forward, while fellow Mustang Wapikun Coonishish was named Best Goalie. Noka Kistabish of Team Pikogan picked up the Best Defense award.

The final of the Women's Broomball-Open division also produced a thriller as the Wemindji Ice Stars and Chisasibi North Stars needed overtime to determine a champion. Despite being badly outplayed by Wemindji, the North Stars had a chance to win as a result of the outstanding play of goaltender Amy Diamond. Displaying the positioning and athleticism of a hockey goaltender, Diamond denied the Ice Stars again and again before giving up the winning goal three and a half minutes into the overtime period. For her efforts, Diamond was named Best Goalie and many believe she should have also earned MVP honours even though the North Stars failed to win the championship.

The MVP award went to Monica Visitor of Wemindji, while her teammate Stephanie Asquabanskum was named Best Forward. Chisasibi's Catherine Washpabano was named Best Defense and Micheline Saganash of the Waswanipi Eagles was the tourney's Top Scorer.

The Women's Broomball 30+ final saw two undefeated teams meet. Again, the Broomball final went to overtime before Shirley Chiskamish of Team Chisasibi settled things with a goal 7:31 into the extra frame, earning her MVP honours.

The Class B-I Hockey Final included some familiar faces as the Mistissini Chummies battled the Lac Simon Beavers for the championship ban-



Wabaguin Longchap scores



Wabaguin Longchap



Charles Hester is honored for his work with the Cree Nation Bears

ner. Most CREE Senior Hockey Tourney fans will recognize the core of the Chummies lineup as the same group of players that were part of the Mistissini Trappers' squad that dominated the Class A division over the last decade. Fans in attendance could be forgiven for showing their concern for the former Class A champs when they fell behind early to Lac Simon, one of the few Algonquin entries in the tourney. But Titus Metabie would score late in the 1st and early in the 3rd to carry the Chummies to the Class B-1 championship.

If there was an award for Most Class Displayed by a Finalist Team, it would have to go to Lac Simon, as the Beavers stayed on the ice following the presentation of the championship banner and the Chummies' victory lap to salute the

champs with their sticks raised high as the Chummies left the ice.

Metabie was named MVP, while Mistissini teammates Ben Neeposh and Eric Benac took home the Best Forward and Best Defense awards. Lac Simon's Ben Gagné was named Best Goalie while Pikogan Mustang forward Billy Kistabish earned the nod as Best Scorer.

In the Old Timers 40+ Division, Team Moose Factory defeated the Waskaganish Big Chiefs 4-1. Despite losing by three goals, Big Chiefs' goalie Martin Desrosiers won Best Goalie after a stellar performance in the final where he made some acrobatic saves including a memorable save with his face mask.

Lac Simon was represented in another final, but again came up short as the Eagles fell to the Waskaganish Ex-Wings in Class B-2 by a score of 4-1.

For tournament scores, stats and awards: www.tournoisenligne.ca/home.do?t=1634

Tournament Notes: Three teams were forced to pull out of the tournament as a result of the power failure that struck the communities of Wemindji and Chisasibi in the days leading up to the tournament. As members of the Canadian Rangers, a number of the players on Chisasibi Old Timers, Wemindji Old Timers and Wemindji's B-2 hockey team were called into service to provide much-needed assistance to those who

were left without power for several days. While many champions were crowned in Val-d'Or on tournament weekend, the dedication and sacrifice of these men should not be forgotten.

A number of players and organizers were honoured during the tournament's opening ceremonies on Friday, Decemebr 9. With a number of dignitaries in attendance, including the Chiefs of several Cree communities, the deputy mayor of Val-d'Or and other politicians, the organizers of the Cree Nation Summer Games, including honorary chairman Ted Moses, were honoured for their efforts in making the Games a reality. Deputy Grand Chief Ashley Iserhoff accepted a plaque on behalf of those who have worked so hard on past games and the next one scheduled for July 2012.

Gloria Holly and Charles J. Hester were presented with plaques to commemorate their work in the development of the Cree Nation Bears hockey program.

Members of the Mistissini Trappers, who won nine Class A titles between 1999 and 2009 were also honoured. Accepting the award on behalf of all players who wore the Trapper jersey during those years were Cliff and Eric Benac, Titus Metabie, Robie Petawabano, Robie Petawabano Jr. and Ben Neeposh.



Malcolm Diamond of the Waskaganish Wings goes toe to toe with Stephane Madore of Bar Chez Frid in Class A Hockey action





Waskaganish Ex-Wings - Class B-2 Champs



Mistissini Mustangs accept Womens Hockey championship banner



Mistissini Chummies - Class B-1 Champs



Mistissini Chummies - Class B-1 Champs - Team photo



Team Moose Factory accepts Old Timers Champ banner



Wemindji Ice Stars - Womens Broomball Champs

Kin power

For the Coopers, the CREE Senior Hockey Tourney is a family affair

Story and photos by Daniel Coyle

While it is not unusual for families to get together to attend the CREE Senior Hockey and Broomball Tournament, for the Cooper boys the tourney is truly a family affair. At this year's event, no less than three generations of the Cooper family are participating.

Allan Cooper participated in his 30th tournament in 2011. A former Class A and Old Timer hockey player, Allan now plays the role of PA announcer and manages the music and big screen in the main arena at the Air Creebec Centre in Val-d'Or – primary site of this year's tourney.

"This is the 31st year of the tournament and I have only missed one year. I have been here since it started both as a fan and a player. Now I get to watch my sons and my grandson play together. It is amazing," said Allan.

The Cooper effect was being felt in Val-d'Or by the Class A Waswanipi Chiefs; the team that Allan's sons Chris and Naaman and nephew Alex played pivotal roles in getting into the playoff round, where they were defeated in a scrappy match by eventual champions, Bar Chez Frid of Amos.

Alex has had to make the biggest adjustment to Class A, where he is playing against much older and experienced players for the first time in his career.

"This is my second year in this tournament," said Alex. "It is a whole different level playing with older guys with experience. But it doesn't change my game much."

Although he is one of the youngest players in the tournament, Alex already brings a great deal of experience to the Chiefs. The 19-year-old was recently traded to the OCN Blizzard of the Manitoba Junior Hockey League and will join the club after the Christmas break.

Alex has also enjoyed some early success in his hockey career as a part of the Sudbury Nickel Capital Wolves team



Alex Cooper

that won the 2008 Telus Cup National Championship.

"That is one of the great things about this tournament," said Alex's uncle and teammate Naaman Cooper. "A lot of these young guys are playing out of town now. They have tremendous skills and it just makes the tourney better."

To his credit, Naaman has now played nine years in the CREE Senior Hockey tournament, all at the Class A level. Prior to joining the Waswanipi Chiefs, Naaman was a member of the Chisasibi Hunters that won the Class A title in 2008.

"We broke the streak for the Mistissini Trappers that year. It was pretty special to win.

I moved to the Chiefs the year after and we've been trying to win a championship since," continued Naaman, who has now settled in Waswanipi, where he is the Assistant Coordinator with the Waswanipi Recreation Department.



Allan Cooper

"I have always loved playing hockey. But things like school and my job are more important now. I mostly play in Native tournaments now in other communities. What I do at work and with family is what is most important."

Chris is the oldest of the Cooper boys and, with the exception of his dad Allan, is the one with the most on-ice experience at the CREE Senior Hockey Tournament.

"I've been playing here for a lot of tournaments. I've played with all my brothers, now my nephews and soon my son," explained Chris who counts 2011 as his 20th year playing in Class A.

"I've also played with my other brothers, Johnny and Allan. Actually, I have seen four generations come and go in this tournament. I see a lot guys in the room now, I used to play with their dads, now I play with their kids," said Chris with a laugh.

"When I started I was 16, I was playing with men in their 30s. Then guys

started coming in round my age, then I started playing with my younger brothers and now I am playing with Alex's generation," continued Chris, who currently works at a sawmill in Waswanipi operated by Nabakatuk Forest Products.

always managed to pull it through," said Allan in a more serious tone.

"Every community must build things that that are important for people and their families. Every annual event is important to its community. And this tourney is good for the Cree and non-

"Vern has worked very hard to make it to the pro level," said Allan, who is clearly a proud father. "He spent five years in the OHL and at the end of his last game, he cried because he was sad to be leaving the league. He is getting his



Naaman Cooper



Chris Cooper

But if you think that makes Chris feel old, guess again. He plans on playing for as long as he can, and he hopes that is a long time.

"I want to come back, that's for sure. If I make the team, I will be back. I'm going to try out again," he said through his infectious laugh.

"Right now I am just having fun. I am glad they invited me to play with them. For years I took care of the team but now I am just here to have fun."

Both Allan and Chris have seen a lot of changes in the decades they have been part of the CREE Senior Hockey Tournament. Allan remembers one story in particular.

"I remember it clearly when one of the players fought a referee. I won't name him, but he was banned for life and I haven't seen him since," recalled Allan.

"The tournament has had hard times; times when teams couldn't make it, when there was no money, when people didn't show up. But the tournament has

Natives alike. This type of event has really maintained relations between Natives and non-Natives and I think it is very important that there are other events in northern Quebec and Cree territory where Cree and non-Natives get together," continued Allan.

The Coopers are not the only family that has multiple members on the Waswanipi Chiefs squad. In fact, of the 14 players on the team, nine come from three families, including the Coopers.

The other family trios on the Chiefs include the Happyjacks (Clayton, Jimmy and David Jr.) and the Gull-Chums (Rylan, Eldon and Chris Saganash)

And Chris, Naaman and Alex are not the only Coopers with hockey talent. Vern Cooper, 21, made his pro-hockey debut this season with the Missouri Mustangs of the Central Hockey League, following five years in the OHL split between the Sault Ste. Marie Greyhounds and the Plymouth Whalers.

chance in the pros, but hopefully we will see him at this tournament again."

In the meantime, it is Chris, Naaman and Alex who carry the torch for the Cooper family. But the most important question remains to be answered – which of the three teammates is the best hockey player?

"The one with the young legs," said Chris.

"We are all different," added Naaman. "We play defence, Alex plays forward and we all have different styles."

And, has playing with his uncles changed Alex's approach to the game? "Not very much," said Alex. "But there's a few things that I've probably taught them."

Given the strong hockey blood that runs through the Cooper family, there can be little doubt that each new generation will have something to teach the older ones.

"AS SOON AS I FELT MYSELF FALLING, BOTH MY LEGS FELL THROUGH THE ICE. I HELD MY GUN IN ONE HAND AND HELD ONTO AN IRON ROD ON THE OTHER. MY HAND THAT HELD THE GUN PLUNGED INTO THE WATER."

Dangerous Ice

Told by Harry Scipio

Translated and transcribed by Brian Webb

One time, I experienced a frightening event out on the bay. I fell through the ice. This happened during the fall way out in the bay.

The ice began to form and there was still some open water in the channels between islands. These were the places where we'd spot seals popping up to breathe. As we drove our dogsled, we saw a seal pop up. We stopped the dogteam. I went over to the edge of the ice and sat there waiting for the seal to surface again. When the seal appeared, I shot it.

I had shot the seal and the dogs were sitting where we had stopped. We had a canoe strapped on our sled. My companion watched and waited near by.

Some of the ice still wasn't solid and at the edge, it was like floating patches that looked like plates. A patch was probably the size of a kitchen table. The patches of ice weren't fused together and were all floating individually.

I hadn't noticed that I had changed my stance. As soon as I felt myself falling, both my legs fell through the ice. I held my gun in one hand and held onto an iron rod on the other. My hand that held the gun plunged into the water. My other hand with the iron rod was on the ice surface. I could not move at all. I could not move my arm also. My gun was still in my grasp under

water. The frigid water was up to my chest.

My companion rushed towards me and pulled me out of the water. I experienced this dangerous event out in the bay. This wasn't about drifting away on a sheet of ice. The patches of ice were like table tops and I fell in the gap. This was where I fell in the water. I encountered this perilous event out on the bay.

I did not panic. I was told that people should not panic when they go through a dangerous experience. I was told that they shouldn't have fear. I remained calm. We still continued on our journey. We were heading to Cape Jones. Even though this happened, we continued our trip. My companions gave me some of their clothes to put on and we continued to Cape Jones. This was where we had originally wanted to go. The White people were already at Cape Jones. This is the story that I'm telling of something frightening that I experienced myself.

Translator's notes: The "White people" at Cape Jones was the military presence during the Cold War. The Canadian and American military set up a radar station at Cape Jones in the late 1950s as part of the Mid-Canada Line of radar stations. Cree men in the area were given menial jobs and were able to earn a bit of money during the operation.



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Within 24 hours:

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Within 48 hours:

My nerve endings adjust to the absence of nicotine...
My ability to smell and taste is enhanced...

Within 72 hours:

My bronchial tubes relax, making breathing easier...
My lung capacity increases...

Within 2 weeks to 3 months:

My circulation improves...
My walking becomes easier..
My lung function increases up to 30%...

Within 1 to 9 months:

My coughing, sinus congestion, fatigue and shortness of breath decreases...
My cilia re-grow in lungs, increasing ability to handle mucous, clean the lungs, reduce infection...
My body's overall energy increases...

Within 1 year:

My heart disease death rate is halfway back to that of a non-smoker

Within 5 years:

My heart disease rate drops to that of a non-smoker...
My lung cancer death rate decreases halfway back to that of a non-smoker...

Within 10 years:

My lung cancer death rate drops almost to that of a non-smoker...
My incidence of other cancers of the mouth, larynx, esophagus, bladder, kidney, pancreas - decreases...

For information: Ron Shisheesh
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Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay

Don't they get it?

It's time for the AFN to reassess its role and take a commanding position

By Daniel David



Two symbols stand in stark contrast to each other the moment one enters the Special Chiefs Assembly of the Assembly of First Nations in Ottawa. The first symbol is a plains teepee – empty, mute and majestic. It's also completely out of place in this building, which is the other significant symbol. The building is the Ottawa Congress Centre that is attached to the ritzy Westin Hotel where most of the AFN's chiefs and quite a few observers have rooms.

The teepee is a symbol of traditional values and past struggles for human dignity and basic human rights. On the other hand, the Congress Centre is a monument to forces that have traditionally dispossessed and oppressed Indigenous peoples in Canada: big business, big money and big government. The two symbols stand in sharp contrast to each other and capture the underly-

ing meaning of a story that dominates recent headlines.

The story of Attawapiskat eclipses almost everything else including anything about the AFN's annual year-end conference. Just about every headline of every Canadian daily newspaper and broadcast news program is about Attawapiskat. Freezing temperatures, sick children and hundreds of people crammed into overcrowded trailers, mould-contaminated homes and even tents. This story crashes into the Canadian conscience, presented not only as a human crisis taking place in a northern community but as a moral crisis and failure of the federal government.

One question surfaces in most stories and editorials: Why? Why do Canadians allow anybody to endure such terrible living conditions for so long? Why did it take so long for the govern-

ment and the news media to wake up? Why are similar terrible living conditions typical of too many northern reserves? Why do these stories always sneak up on southern society, generate demands that government finally do something? Why do living conditions in these northern communities never seem to improve?

Chief Teresa Spence declared a state of emergency as sub-freezing temperatures settled over the community in mid-November. Not long after, NDP MP Charlie Angus uploaded a series of videos to YouTube bringing the despicable living conditions that Cree families endured in Attawapiskat to global audiences. The story went viral on the Internet. The media reaction in Canada, though, was modest at first. It was just another story about terrible living conditions in yet another impoverished, remote, northern Cree community.

The story jumped up a notch thanks to a decision by Aboriginal Affairs Minister John Duncan to impose third-party management without prior notice to or discussion with Chief Spence and her council. In fact, the November 30 letter from Duncan shocked the chief and council as they met in emergency sessions to find safe accommodations for people living in tents and unsafe homes. Chief Spence, and mainstream journalists, recognized a ministerial gag order when they saw one.

Chief Spence upon receiving the notification was incensed by actions of Aboriginal Affairs Canada, not only by interrupting a meeting of the community's emergency team, but also by the cited reasons for the imposition of an Indian Agent. Chief Spence expressed surprise that after over a month of inaction, the Harper government has elected to blame the poorest of Canadian society rather than to offer assistance.

All of a sudden, reporters had a David & Goliath story. News crews jammed onto airplanes heading to the coast of James Bay. Most journalists hop-

ing to jump on the story, however, were stuck thanks to the high cost of northern travel. The timing of the AFN conference in Ottawa couldn't have been better though. If media interest held until the AFN meeting began in early December, then Chief Spence and other northern chiefs would be at the media's beck and call.

The AFN's annual conference doesn't usually attract a lot of attention from mainstream reporters. If pressed, a few might admit they drop by out of a sense of duty. In fact, the AFN meeting doesn't attract a lot of chiefs either. Attendance has been slipping for years. In the past, some northern chiefs said they took the opportunity of the AFN meeting to gift shop for the holidays.

"It's not unusual. I've seen resolutions passed by less than 20 chiefs in the meeting," said Russell Diabo, editor of First Nations Strategic Bulletin. The AFN says it represents more than 600 band councils or First Nations. The AFN is in fact an organization of chiefs.

The questions put to Diabo were about quorum: How many chiefs must

be at this AFN meeting to make it and its resolutions legal? "That's easy," he said. "50% plus one."

Asked to explain what that meant, Diabo said that due to declining attendance of chiefs at the annual Special Chiefs Assembly, the AFN decided to change the rules.

"This isn't what used to be called a Confederacy meeting or the AGA (annual general assembly). At those types of meetings, the rule is that a certain number of chiefs and proxies – of all the 633 chiefs within the AFN – had to attend or the AFN didn't have quorum."

But given the time of year and fewer chiefs showing up for the end-of-year meeting, more memorable for its annual Christmas party, the AFN changed the rules on quorum.

"Now, quorum for the Special Chiefs Assembly is achieved when there's at least 60% of the total number of chiefs and proxies registered at the conference – not the total of chiefs across the country," Diabo continued. "So it's 60% of whoever is here. The organizers do a head count on the morning of the first

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(CEFC/CAEC)

day of the conference. Once they count 60% of the chiefs registered at this meeting, they proclaim quorum.”

Diabo said a head count doesn’t happen every morning nor is it needed. “Any chief or proxy may raise a question and ask for a count, but that never happens. At least, not that I know of.”

The conference registration desk provided attendance figures of 192 chiefs and proxies with 887 total for people registered. Asked for a breakdown by province, registration-desk workers said they hadn’t done that yet. Nor did they identify the registered participants by categories, such as government, non-governmental organization, labour, religious organization, media or business.

Bernard Hervieux is the executive director and senior journalist with SOCAM, the radio network that links Innu and Attikamekw communities in northern Quebec. He’s been asking questions about attendance and quorum at the conference. “I don’t see many chiefs here,” he said. “I thought there would be a lot more.” Looking around, he notices a number of journalists milling about, looking for someone to interview.

Asked what he thinks the conference is about, he says one word: Attawapiskat.

That’s a problem. Reporters arrived in abundance to the AFN conference but they had eyes for only one story – Attawapiskat.

The AFN has a report and updates on various programs dealing with Indian Residential Schools programs, including an explanation of the way survivors’ claims are recognized, assessed and dealt with; how problems with legal representation are being dealt with; and why so many survivors are excluded by the Independent Assessment Process (IAP). One of the co-chairs of the Truth and Reconciliation (TRC), Marie Wilson, is there to explain how the TRC’s mandate fits in with these and other programs. But there are no mainstream journalists in the audience and the seats are half-filled, mostly by survivors.

Similarly across the hall, a report on education takes place in a much larger

room. The report explains the effect on communities by federal funding policies that under-fund on-reserve schools, almost forcing students to attend non-Aboriginal schools off-reserve. The term “partnerships” is tossed around but participants call it a euphemism for “downloading federal responsibility for Indian education to the provinces”.

Again, there isn’t a single mainstream reporter present to explain to a larger Canadian audience why another priority of the federal government is failing First Nations. But then again, about one in every four seats is occupied. So it goes, from workshop to workshop.

“IT’S NOT UNUSUAL. I’VE SEEN RESOLUTIONS PASSED BY LESS THAN 20 CHIEFS IN THE MEETING,” SAID RUSSELL DIABO, EDITOR OF FIRST NATIONS STRATEGIC BULLETIN. THE AFN SAYS IT REPRESENTS MORE THAN 600 BAND COUNCILS OR FIRST NATIONS. THE AFN IS IN FACT AN ORGANIZATION OF CHIEFS.

AFN documents describe the theme of this meeting as Realizing Our Rights: Unlocking Our Economies. Clearly, the AFN ties the second part of that theme – developing First Nation economies – to the first – realizing rights. So it’s no surprise that the highlight of the past year’s accomplishments is a trip to China by National Chief Shawn A-in-chut Atleo and various chiefs to drum up trade between that country and First Nations in Canada.

How much trade are they talking about? What does this mean for what types of products or industries? Who will benefit from this trade agreement? How many jobs or training positions are planned or will be created? Details and facts are missing in the documents and presentations in favour of vague statements about progress.

Top of the agenda, however, is the announcement in November that Prime Minister Stephen Harper has agreed to a meeting on First Nation-Crown relations on January 24, 2012. The AFN sent out a backgrounder about what it expects to take place at this meeting.

The gathering will be aimed at strengthening the Crown-First Nations relationship and unlocking the full potential of First Nations driven change for progress recognizing and respecting mutual responsibilities and accountability.

“It is more and more evident to everyone that we need action to deal with the long-standing problems facing First Nations and Canada,” Atleo said. “We have communities in crisis that need action now, but we must stop lurching from crisis to crisis. This requires action and commitment to address systemic problems, and it requires that we work together. It is

time to reset the relationship to the one formed at the time of treaty – based on partnership and respect.”

But the AFN chiefs don’t appear to have a lot of trust in Harper or his government. They say \$6 billion needs to be spent to bring on-reserve housing up to code. A third of reserves endure never-ending boil water alerts. And on and on at the same time that federal directives are sent to all government departments, including Health and Aboriginal Affairs, to identify where they will cut spending by 10%. Then they see a virtual gag order slapped on Chief Spence after she tried to wake a comatose Aboriginal Affairs Minister to a crisis situation with lives at stake.

They’re wary of words like “partnership” and don’t see much of a relationship of mutual respect coming down from Ottawa. Patrick Madahbee, Grand Council Chief of the Anishinabek Nation, said they’d like to see one though. “Maybe it’s time they tried something different. Maybe we need a whole new perspective on [Parliament] Hill. The

worn-out, tired politics of Canada isn't cutting it anymore."

Governments, however, react to public pressure – pressure by the voters who elect them – and powerful corporations that contribute money to their party. People on First Nations don't vote in numbers to make a difference. They don't have the economic clout it takes to impress governments to change their policies. So First Nations must appeal to the Canadian voter, the average Canadian citizen.

This means they need to educate the average Canadian citizen who is often just as tired of the never-changing living conditions on many First Nations. They are often just as anxious to see real improvements as much as First Nations. But there's a disconnect between the need to confront one crisis after another, both at the band and the national Indian level.

As you can tell, this is the story that eclipsed the AFN and almost everything the national status Indian organization might have accomplished, showing up in

news reports and editorials. This emergency measure, combined with YouTube videos of the living conditions posted by Charlie Angus, generated international attention and condemnation, an airlift of reporters looking scandal, and a disaster relief effort by the Canadian Red Cross.


Comments by Duncan that he and his department didn't know about a situation that has been getting worse every year for decades. Harper implies financial mismanagement, and Attawapiskat itself, is to blame despite 10 years of co-management by Duncan's department. Duncan imposes third-party management, condemned by Chief Spence as nothing more than an attempt to gag the band council and deflect responsibility.


One thing is evident. No matter which issue was discussed at the AFN conference, Canada has consistently fallen far short of the goals it has set for itself in dealing with First Nations. From a promise that bad water would soon be a thing of the past, to equal opportunities and a desire to fulfill fiduciary obligations, one is reminded the teepee is still

empty but the symbols of Canada's oppression and dispassion shine brightly on. We may understand what has led to these problems, but Canada has a long way to go to solving and preventing them.

It isn't only Canada's problem though. The AFN has a credibility problem it must address as well. It has slowly become a mirror image of the Aboriginal Affairs department. Subtle messages over the years have left the chiefs – in an organization of chiefs – with the impression that their voice is not that important anymore. This and other factors – such as increasingly tight budgets back home, and the high cost of travel to and from AFN meetings in Ottawa – have been likely leading to a steady decline in the chiefs' attendance. Perhaps if AFN did not spend so much on ritzy venues and expensive hotels, and devoted itself more to supporting communities in severe crisis, the organization might find more people showing up, including more journalists.


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*Wishing you peace, joy and happiness
throughout the New Year.*

Chef Ghislain Picard
et le personnel de l'Assemblée
des Premières Nations du
Québec et du Labrador

Chef Ghislain Picard
and the staff of the Assembly
of First Nations of Quebec
and Labrador



Stimulating emporium

The Salon des métiers d'art featured a wealth of crafts produced in Quebec

By Christine Rigby

During the holiday season leading up to Christmas, local craft fairs were popping up all over Quebec. While most were fairly small in size, Montreal hosted the country's largest professional crafts show at Place Bonaventure throughout December. The 10th annual Salon des métiers d'art du Québec (SMAQ) welcomed over 400 craftspeople who displayed their diverse and contemporary crafts, and featured an art installation involving over 60 First Nations textiles artists.

The SMAQ provides great alternatives when it comes to holiday gifts. Unlike big box stores, the Salon offers distinct and original Quebec-made products, which is great for local economies and the environment. Not only that, it creates an opportunity for people to share more thoughtful gifts while at the same time supporting local artists and small businesses.

There was no mistake that the 2011 edition of the Salon was a large-scale event with lots to see. The professional crafts on display covered a large variety of products, some of which you may have never seen or



Handbags- Cynthia DM

There were ceramics and candles as well as toys and musical instruments. While these types of items dominated the fair, there were several artists who showcased truly original art.

For those who love music, Gilles Perrault had a booth for a percussion instrument called the tamböa, which is

Cynthia DM offered one-of-a-kind, handcrafted, silk-screened handbags and totes. Her bags come in a variety of beautiful earth tones and most have images of various birds and animals, a great gift for your eco-friendly acquaintances.

"BY FAR THE MOST ORIGINAL AND MOST INTERESTING AT THE SALON WERE MICHEL BOIRE'S WOOD SCULPTURES. USING DISCARDED WOODEN LOGS AS A STARTING POINT, BOIRE CREATES BEAUTIFUL ABSTRACT SCULPTURES OF BIRDS OUT OF PIECES OF WOOD."

heard of before. As at most crafts fairs there was an abundance of jewelry, and other fashion-oriented items, hats, bags, knits and other accessories.

a hand-carved hollow wooden box that creates the most pleasant sound when struck with rubber-tipped drumsticks. In the accessories department,





May your home be filled with
the joy of family and friends now
and throughout the new year



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By far the most original and most interesting at the Salon were Michel Boire's wood sculptures. Using discarded wooden logs as a starting point, Boire creates beautiful abstract sculptures of birds out of pieces of wood that most people would throw away. His creations are striking and unique. Part of the fun of his work is that he makes use of the scraps from the sculpture to create a form-fitting casing for each piece. That is equally artistic.

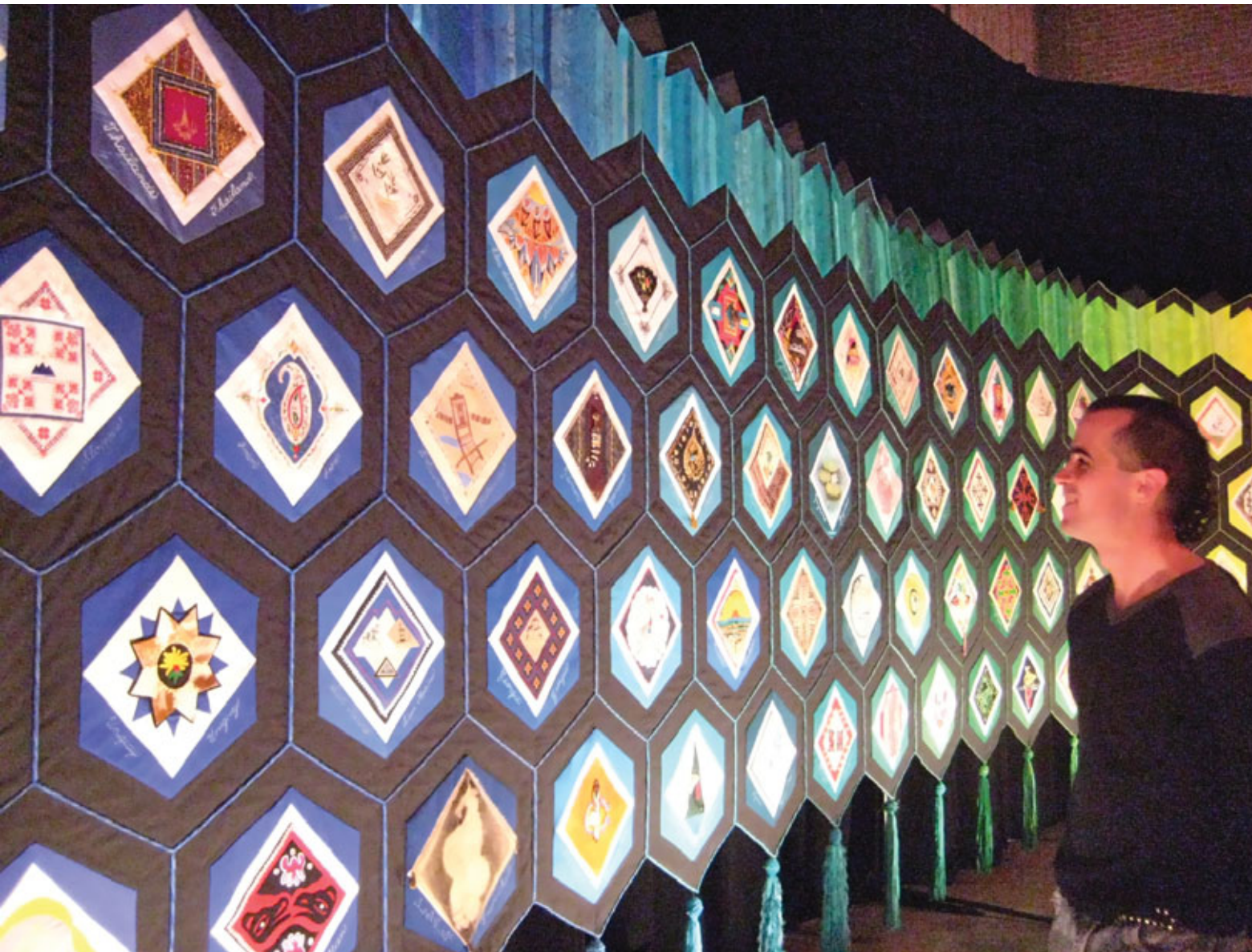
Although the main focus of the SMAQ are the crafts, be they practical or decorative, you can also find food and drink goodies. Tucked away in one of the corners of the exhibition

hall there was an area saturated by artisanal food vendors, many offering free samples of their products. Here you could find a wide variety of Quebec products that ranged from specialty teas and chocolates, to ice cider and game meats. While most of the edible items can be enjoyed by all, people with more experimental palates should check out products from the Ferm Québec-Oies, such as goose and other less common delicacies, and Gourmet Sauvage Inc. for treats made from wild flowers and other plants.

While shopping is the focal point of the SMAQ, there was an interesting exhibit called the "Quilt of Belonging"

(www.quiltofbelonging.ca). Founded by Esther Bryan in 1998, the 120-foot long collaborative textile project was designed to bring together the unique personal and cultural stories that enrich our country.

Over 300 artists volunteered to participate from all over Canada, from St. John's to Victoria, including 71 individuals from First Nations communities. Using materials ranging from sealskin to silk, the colourful project highlights what bind us together, it "celebrates our common humanity and promotes harmony and compassion among people" – a lovely sentiment to hold on to in the New Year, if not always.



"Quilt of Belonging" - Esther Bryan and Friends



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 To learn more about the Aboriginal Business Hall of Fame laureates, visit www.ccab.com.

Is the current Indian Affairs Minister John Duncan, the best or worst ever?

By Daniel David

Comments from people attending the Special Chiefs Assembly of the Assembly of First Nations. (note: Most people – everyone but one - insisted on anonymity because they feared repercussions if named. In fairness, I mentioned no names to all.)

I'm going to give him a neither, only because I don't think he's had enough time in the job. Although I think, coming out of the gate, he seems to have left a really bad taste in everyone's mouth. But maybe, just maybe, he can change. I'm an optimistic individual. I think everybody needs to be given a chance to prove themselves. You know, a couple of months? I don't think that does it. Unless, of course, you have this huge hidden agenda that you've been working on for the past five years!

It's hard to beat Chrétien. He was the worst. This guy is toward the bottom. I mean, he's a robot. I watched him. He reads cue cards. He doesn't seem to have an independent thought. The bureaucracy seems to write the script for him. Or maybe it's the Prime Minister's Office. I don't know. It's obvious though that somebody's doing it because he's not speaking off the cuff like some ministers did.

Basically, what all of the others have said so far. If you go to Indian Affairs in Hull and see the hallway with pictures of all the ministers of Indian Affairs, we call that the "Wall of Shame."



Worst. Is that all I have to say? You want me to go on? Well, just recently he's shown why. Look at his stand on housing in the First Nations. Him and his staff are unaware of what's going on in Canada. That's probably the biggest point right there. Him and his staff are unaware of what's going on in First Nations country.

I've been around a long time. He's not the best. He's not the worst. I think like most of these guys, he gets the job and he has to obey his political masters. In terms of what this current government is doing, their problems are the worst I've seen in a long, long time. But we'll see about him. I don't hold much hope out for him. Right now, I'm holding my judgment to see how badly he does do. I think he really does have to do what he's told by Harper and those guys and it's really not good.

I think (Duncan) epitomizes the agenda of the Conservative government. I think we're preoccupied with the Indian Affairs department, but if you look across all the ministries you find the same Conservative agenda. If you look at that Conservative agenda, you'll find that they are not the most sympathetic or supportive of First Nations.



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Dust in the wind

There's nothing to put one's daily concerns into perspective like reading about a black hole at the centre of the universe that's about the size of four million suns and in the process of swallowing an enormous gas cloud with three times the mass of our planet.

As reported by *Nature* magazine, researchers using the European Southern Observatory's "Very Large Telescope" have calculated the path and speed – about 2,350 kilometres *per second* – of the cloud as it spirals toward the black hole. They estimate it will disappear in 2013.

Talk about a game changer. At least our neighbourhood of the universe is free of such big celestial bullies.

Here on our humble little planet, however, we're looking at a game changer of a different kind. Some of you might have scoffed at recent news stories about the so-called "God particle" that observers say is on the verge of being identified after decades of research by hundreds of scientists around the globe.

It's real, however. It's called the Higgs boson, which theoretical physicists call the missing link to understanding how the universe operates. It has the potential to, eventually, completely change the way we interact with matter in our world. As they say here in Quebec, *ce n'est pas de la petite bière*.

I'm blessed (and occasionally cursed) to have some very smart friends. One of them is a stout fellow from the sticks near Moose Creek, Ontario, whose insatiable curiosity about the world and the universe led him to a doctorate in astrophysics from McGill University. His name is Claude Théoret. I attended his PhD defence at McGill a decade or so ago and, besides being gobsmacked by his brilliance, was reminded why I chose to study the social sciences.

I asked Claude to explain for me, in layman's terms, how it works and what this could mean for us. I may torture his answer, but essentially it goes like this:

the Higgs boson is a magnetic field, and what gives mass to any particle, or matter, is defined by how it couples with the Higgs field. Photons, for instance, have no mass because they do not couple with the Higgs field.

Essentially, it's the force that gives heft to matter, the stuff. The more mass an object has, the more energy is required to move it because of the greater resistance it encounters from the Higgs field. Now researchers using the Large Hadron Collider in Geneva feel they are close to finding the Higgs particle after years of smashing protons together at close to the speed of light in the facility's 27-kilometre-long circular track.

I know: it's hard to wrap one's head around the concept. It sounds like the plot of a bad Dan Brown novel. So, like a good student, I put the smartest question I could to my friend Claude: "So what?"

Well, he said, imagine driving a tractor-trailer full of freight around the world on a drop of gasoline. In other words, if we could manipulate the Higgs particle and reduce its sticky, molasses-like resistance to mass, we would only need infinitely small amounts of energy to do boundless things. Like visiting other galaxies, for example.

That's why this discovery is a game changer. An ability to understand what the smart folks call the "essential fabric" of the universe, and therefore, to be able to manipulate it, is why the Higgs boson has been dubbed the God particle.

Change of this magnitude can be unsettling, to be sure. But my friend Claude is bubbling over with excitement. As an analogy, he pointed to Albert Einstein's revolutionary explanation of how the photoelectric effect actually works in 1905, for which he later won the Nobel Prize.

This knowledge was the foundation for the technological revolution that

completely changed mankind's way of life during the 20th century. But it didn't happen right away, Claude cautioned. While Einstein's discovery allowed for the development of semiconductor electronics, which really accelerated our relationship with technology, this great leap forward only began a half-century later, in the 1950s.

Likewise, Claude said, even if the scientists are right about the Higgs boson it's not going to change the game immediately. His prediction is that practical applications of this knowledge wouldn't appear for 30 or 40 years.

Even then, this scientific advance is still dependent on social factors, he added. The political choices we make now will largely determine whether we are still leading society with a high standard of living a half-century from now, or stagnating as a laggard while others implement this knowledge and reap its potentially boundless rewards.

Frankly, the outlook on this score here in Canada is far from promising. The Conservative government has proudly and aggressively struck an anti-science and anti-knowledge stance on a score of issues, from climate change to demographics to, tellingly, evolution.

A new brain drain of Canada's top researchers is beginning anew as the Harper government squeezes funding for science, especially in alternative energy fields. The pugnacious rejection of the Kyoto accord is a sad statement in this regard.

But there's no putting the genie back in the bottle. Even Harper can't turn back the clock – much as his know-nothing disciples would like to pretend the modern world doesn't exist. The question we need to face is whether we are going to use this knowledge for our benefit, or whether we will be left behind in the race for understanding, fearful of being buffeted by change like so much dust in the wind.



UNDER THE NORTHERN SKY

We can make things better

by Xavier Kataquapit

As Canadians we have a good reputation world-wide for giving. In the case of my home community of Attawapiskat and the recent news about the housing crisis, the Canadian Red Cross stepped in to help out. I would like to take this opportunity to thank that organization and all those people who donated to its fundraising drive. I also want to voice my appreciation to the wonderful people who have contributed to other fundraising efforts and awareness campaigns.

I never had to worry too much about hunger when I was a child. My family was lucky in that we had parents that always managed to find some form of work in the community to feed a family of 11. We also carried on the tradition of hunting and gathering which really helped to contribute to food for the family.

The big problem with nutrition was due to the fact that everything was so expensive to buy at the local store. That is still the case today because food has to be transported by air or summer barge or by winter road. This results in huge costs for store bought food products. Many families just can't afford to eat well and the diet features a lot of cheap pasta, canned food and processed meats. In turn, this has led to malnutrition and diabetes in many First Nations across Canada.

Actually hunger is very widespread in our world and that is a very sad thing. Most people reading these words have lots of food and never go to bed hungry at night. We are the lucky ones.

Did you know that hunger is the world's number one health risk? It kills more people in the world than AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis combined. Every five seconds a child dies in the world from hunger. One in seven people in the world go to bed hungry. One in four children in developing countries are under weight. More people are hungry in the world than the combined populations of Canada, the United States and the countries of the European Union.

Most of us here in Canada eat what we want, when we want and generally the sky is the limit. What if you had been born in a developing country or on a remote First Nation? I imagine if you had the opportunity to choose, you would prefer to have arrived in a developed country and most everything you would want was available to you.

This have-and-have-not reality that we exists in the world today is grossly unfair. There is no reason for it as we have enough food and resources to share. Part of the problem is that we are insulated from the reality of poverty and hunger in remote First Nations and the third world. If we had the opportunity to visit these places and witness the destitute situations so many people are living in, I am sure we would feel obliged to do something about it.

I know that many people in Canada were surprised to find out that life is so difficult in remote First Nations.

The fact is that somehow we have to change our priorities as people of the planet Earth. We have to realize that things are just not right and as a matter of fact unjust. We have enough wealth and resources but the problem is that most of the power that controls it all is commanded by a very small percentage of the population. That has to change. We need a more fair and equitable system. I am not sure how this can be done. However, I know that if we have the will, no matter what the politics are, we can figure it out.

Right now there are so many good people all over the world who are devoting their time, expertise and efforts to helping people who are underprivileged. And these people are making a difference.

There are small things we can do to help out. It is very easy to make a donation of food or money to your local food bank. There are boxes waiting for you at just about every grocery store in the country.

You can also make a difference by donating to organizations like the Red Cross at www.redcross.ca

You can also support organizations such as the Humanitarian Coalition, which includes Plan Canada, Oxfam Canada, Oxfam Quebec, CARE Canada and Save the Children Canada that all act together in the most dire emergencies. You can donate to them at www.together.ca

These organizations are active worldwide when it comes to crisis situations. Maybe the most important thing we can do is to just take a minute and appreciate how fortunate we are and how we really do have some responsibility in helping others who are not.

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